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RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1398
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3446
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2832
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BISHKEK 000557

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SUBJECT: TURKISH AMBASSADOR CONFIRMS GUL PRESSED BAKIYEV ON
AFGHANISTAN

REF: BISHKEK 513

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Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Turkish Ambassador to Kyrgyzstan Serpil Alpman provided the Ambassador with a read-out of President Gul's May 26-28 visit to Bishkek. Alpman was frank that she had initially opposed the visit, lest it be seen as an endorsement of Kyrgyz President Bakiyev during an election campaign. Alpman confirmed that the majority of Gul's meeting with Bakiyev was spent discussing Afghanistan, with Gul emphasizing the dangers to the region of a destabilized Afghanistan and pushing for Kyrgyzstan to play a more active role. Bakiyev reportedly told Gul that his decision to close Manas Air Base was made solely for economic reasons, but he was "fully prepared" to allow the U.S. to remain at Manas, if certain conditions were met. End Summary.

Election Politics

12. (C) The Ambassador hosted Turkish Ambassador Serpil Alpman for lunch on June 2. Alpman, who has been Ambassador here since January 2005, told the Ambassador that she had initially not favored President Gul's coming to Bishkek, because the visit would be seen as an endorsement of President Bakiyev during an election campaign. In fact, during his welcoming remarks for Gul, Bakiyev said that the "Kyrgyz people" interpreted the visit as Gul's endorsement of him and his government, Alpman noted. Alpman said that during his meeting with Bakiyev, Gul made a strong case for a free, fair, and transparent election.

13. (C) Prior to the visit, opposition Presidential candidate and former Prime Minister Almaz Atambayev had requested to meet with Gul. Alpman said she passed the request to Ankara, despite her doubts whether Atambayev was really a "credible oppositionist." Alpman said that she has been friends with Atambayev for over four years, but she now thought Atambayev was "too close to the government" and had tainted himself by

his service as Bakiyev's Prime Minister in 2007. Alpman said that Gul planned to meet with Atambayev anyway "because it is a tradition to meet with the opposition." However, the meeting was not scheduled, and Atambayev met instead with Gul's Chief of Staff and representatives of the 100-member business delegation that accompanied Gul to Bishkek.

Action on Afghanistan

¶4. (C) Alpman largely corroborated the account of the May 27 Gul-Bakiyev meeting earlier provided to the Ambassador by Turkish MFA Under Secretary for Political Affairs Unal Cevikoz (reftel). Alpman, who also attended the Gul-Bakiyev meeting, said that the majority of the discussion focused on the situation in Afghanistan. She said that Gul described the risks to the whole region of a destabilized Afghanistan, and he emphasized Turkey's commitment of 1000 troops to the effort in Afghanistan. Alpman said that Gul kept returning to the theme that Kyrgyzstan should play a more active role in efforts in Afghanistan. Gul also reportedly told Bakiyev that he hoped the decision to close Manas Air Base was not an "anti-Western" move, "because after the election, you will need the West."

¶5. (C) Bakiyev said that his decision on Manas was not "anti-Western," but had been made solely on economic grounds. Bakiyev complained that the U.S. provided "\$5 billion" in assistance to Pakistan, but had never "adequately compensated" Kyrgyzstan. Bakiyev also complained about the lack of attention from high-level U.S. officials, saying he wanted to meet the "civilian leaders of the U.S. government."

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Open to Keeping Manas

¶6. (C) Bakiyev then said that he was "fully prepared" to allow the U.S. to remain at Manas, and "we are talking." Bakiyev then said there were certain conditions for continued access: that it no longer be a "military" base (Note: Because of the imprecise translation from Kyrgyz to Turkish, Alpman said she was not clear whether Bakiyev was referring to a military designation or to lethal cargo. End Note); that Kyrgyz troops guard the perimeter of the facility; and that the issue of immunity be addressed. Bakiyev reportedly raised the Ivanov shooting and the September 2007 plane collision with Gul, but Gul kept steering the conversation back to the situation in Afghanistan.

Chaotic Visit

¶7. (C) Alpman said that the Kyrgyz Administration had pushed for the visit, but once it was announced, they were uncooperative on many issues and on logistics -- and Bakiyev failed to accompany Gul to a number of events. She said that a roundtable with Turkish businessmen had been difficult, as many businessmen complained that Alpman and her Embassy did not do enough to support them in Kyrgyzstan. Alpman also had run-ins with Gul's staff: an hour before a large dinner Alpman was hosting, Gul's doctor and dietician ordered that the entire menu be scrapped and that the kitchen prepare a salt-free meal for Gul. Alpman said that in the end the visit yielded some progress on economic agreements, and the two Presidents agreed that Turkey would forgive \$9 million of Kyrgyzstan's \$51 million in bilateral debt.

Bishkek Initiative

¶8. (C) In a follow-up meeting between the Ambassador, Alpman, and UN Resident Coordinator in the Kyrgyz Republic Neal Walker, Alpman added some further comments. She said that

Bakiyev had pushed Gul hard for high-level Turkish endorsement of and participation in the Bishkek Initiative. (Note: President Bakiyev's "Bishkek Initiative" is offer to host a conference in Bishkek, under UN auspices, on security in Afghanistan. End Note.) She thought Gul had been receptive to the idea and "it is now being studied seriously in Ankara." Walker commented that the Head of the UN Center for Preventative Diplomacy in Central Asia Miroslav Jenca has been arguing approvingly to the UN community that Kyrgyzstan in fact has "a historical track record in bringing regional people together on the problem of Afghanistan."

¶9. (C) On next steps as far as the UN is concerned, Walker said that Bakiyev is scheduled to meet with UN Under Secretary General (and former USG Ambassador) Lynn Pascoe at the up-coming SCO Summit. It is fully expected that Bakiyev will lobby Pascoe there for UN endorsement of the Bishkek Initiative. Walker thought that on a political level, "Pascoe will probably tell Bakiyev to get in line. Kyrgyzstan has no special political angle on Afghanistan." However, Walker thought that Bakiyev's Initiative might fly (including with a UN endorsement) if it were to be more focused "on some sort of other hook -- such as a technical aspect of the situation."

Comment

¶10. (C) The Turkish President's raising the situation in Afghanistan and his persistence in pushing Bakiyev on the importance of Kyrgyzstan continuing its contribution was timely and effective. On June 2, Bakiyev met with Ministers

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and Agency heads to discuss the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and his Administration's Foreign Policy Department issued a statement that Bakiyev and Gul had agreed on the necessity to "consolidate efforts to strengthen stability in Afghanistan."

GFOELLER